

8 January 2006

## THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

*The Vicar writes:* Although it may seem rather late to say so (but I have waited until now, because many people have been away), I am most grateful to all who helped in so many ways to prepare the church for Christmas, and also to those who did so much in church in connexion with the actual services, as well as all who trudged around the parish with the Christmas leaflets. God bless you all. Mary thanks, too, to all those who remembered us at the Vicarage, and who sent us cards and other things.

The collection at **Olga Cooper's** funeral totalled £100, and was in aid of the Epsom Medical Equipment Fund. We understand that Olga has made a substantial bequest to St Mary's in her will. She was a delightful person, who worked very hard for St Mary's over the years. May she rest in peace.

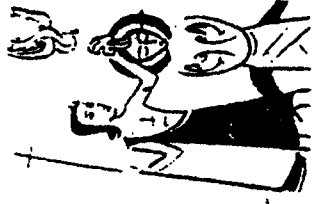
'**Common Worship**' makes the novel suggestion of an 'Epiphany season', modelled on Eastertide, and lasting until Candlemas, with the décor in church remaining in the festal colour of white throughout the period. Although it may cheer up January a bit, and make something of Candlemas in places where it was unheard of before, it is really a curious liturgical solecism, and may well eventually go the way of the crazy 'Ninth Sunday before Christmas and all that', which started the liturgical year off in the old Alternative Service Book. All sorts of calendrical and lectionary gymnastics have now resulted from this particular quirk: the Sundays now have to be reckoned (like the Easter ones) as being 'of Epiphany', and not 'after Epiphany', and a variable number then have to be reckoned as being 'before Lent,' depending upon the date of Easter. When Epiphany itself is celebrated on a Sunday, this involves virtually suppressing today's festival of Our Lord's Baptism, by transferring it back to the Monday before its usual Sunday. (One wit has written, 'the churches will undoubtedly be packed.')

Way back in 1968 the C of E stated that it would not undertake any significant changes in the seasons on ecumenical grounds, but this scheme introduces a clear divergence from both contemporary Roman Catholic and Orthodox (and indeed most other Anglican) practice, and – much more importantly – it mars the uniqueness of Easter, the Lord's fifty-day-long Great Day of Festival. Mercifully, we are not obliged to follow this general mood, since the readings relate easily to either approach, and so we shall return to 'Ordinary Time' (and green) tomorrow. I taught Liturgy at a theological college for some years, and frequently used to point out that, after all the complexities of the late medieval liturgy and its calendar, in England at least things were made that much easier at the Reformation. Much was of course lost in the process, and indeed the services became indescribably boring, but much has been sensitively re-discovered in the modern revisions. It is a pity that it now looks as if some of the old fussiness is also on its way back again, under the guise of 'new insight.'

Here at St Mary's we shall 'return to green' tomorrow, continue to avail ourselves of the provision for observing Candlemas on the Sunday nearest 2 February (this year 29 January), and after that we shall begin the countdown to Lent, and change into blue, the colour generally used in pre-Reformation England for the pre-Lent period. This will be simpler, and, I think, more edifying. W.R.H.

**Next Sunday.** The Second Sunday after Epiphany. It being the third Sunday of the month, there will be the Book of Common Prayer Sung Eucharist at 11.00. A nice, normal Sunday, the first one since 7 November!

*Sharing the love of Christ, the Light of the world, with the people of Ewell.*



In the Christian East the baptism of Jesus is the main Epiphany feature, rather than the visit of the Magi, who always seem to be at the centre of the Epiphany stage in the Christian West. (Curious, when you think about it, because, after all, the Wise Men 'came from the east.'). In the east at Epiphany there is, for example, the Great Blessing of the Waters, often celebrated on a river-bank or at the sea-shore. Jesus' baptism by John at the River Jordan is seen as an anticipation of our own, and is given at the same time a universal and cosmic significance: the Saviour who is himself without sin, enters the streams of the Jordan, thereby cleansing the waters and so imparting grace and redemption to the entire material creation. Our baptism is the foundation of all our Christian life, for baptismal grace – the presence within us of the Holy Spirit – is personal to each one of us. The eastern writer St Kallistos once wrote that the aim of the Christian 'is to return to that perfect grace of the most holy and life-giving Spirit, which was originally conferred upon us through divine baptism.' There is nothing easy about the Christian life, much of it is hard slog. Yet that same source of divine grace, which once transformed our human nature at our baptism, is still with us as divine energy, through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the devotional and sacramental life of the Church.

**Our prayers today.** We pray for our own church and parish, and in the wider Church we pray in the Anglican Communion for the Church in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. \* In our diocesan prayer we pray for the work of the Department of Social Responsibility, and for its new Director, Canon Christopher Rich. In the parish we pray for the work of the External Affairs Committee, and for the people who live in Beaufort Way. (\*See note overleaf.)

\* The 'Presiding Bishop' of this Province, the equivalent of the Archbishop, is the Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, the Most Reverend Clive Handford. He is not a relation of mine, and he has a medial 'd' (sometimes erroneously also given to me by the careless) and we have not met. Although there are several other permutations of the basic surname, like Hannaford or Handforth, I am the only Hanford in *Crockford* with my own spelling, though when I was first ordained there was one other, a retired Vicar of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, who wrote me a most charming letter at the time. Just interesting, perhaps. W.R.H.

## SUNDAY SERVICES

### 0800 HOLY COMMUNION

Order 1: page 167

Eucharistic Prayer B: page 188.

### Common Worship rite

Collect of the Day: page 383

Other Epiphany details: page 304

### 0930

### PROCESSION AND SUNG EUCHARIST

### Common Worship rite

Wayfarers, Children's Hour, and Crèche.  
 Order 1: page 167. Collect of the Day: page 383.  
 Other Epiphany material: page 304.  
 Eucharistic Prayer B: page 188.  
 Setting of the Eucharist: *Howells* in E flat

Processional hymn: 56

Gloria in excelsis: traditional language text on page 211 (*Shaw* melody)

Collect of the Day: page 383. *Readings on separate paper.*

New Testament Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Gradual hymn: 58

The Holy Gospel reading from St Mark

Sermon by *the Vicar*

Nicene Creed (sung today): traditional language text on page 213.

Intercession; Prayers of Penitence (Confession back on page 169);

Then all stand for the Greeting of Peace.

Offertory Hymn: 55 Collection. [Tune: 216]

Eucharistic Prayer B: page 188; Proper Preface: page 304.

Turn back to page 178 for the Lord's Prayer, etc.

Hymn at the Invitation: *on readings paper.* [Tune: 89 ii]

Anthem: Awake us, Lord, and hasten. *J.S. Bach*

Awake us, Lord, and hasten,  
 Thy Holy Spirit give.

The old man in us chausten,

That our new man may live,

On earth may know thee only,

Our thoughts give to thee wholly,

And all thy goodness own.

*All stand* after the anthem for the Post Communion Prayer.

The Blessing and Dismissal

Hymn 49 [First tune]

Welcome to any visitors or newcomers to St Mary's today. Please make yourselves known, and join us for coffee in the church hall across the road between the 0930 and 1100 services.

## 1100 'THE PROCESSION OF THE THREE KINGS,' ALL-AGE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN FAMILY PRAISE FOR EPIPHANY.

1800 Stations of the Nativity at the Crib.

### In church this week

Tuesday 1000 Holy Communion

### Other events and notices.

Monday 2000 Standing Committee of the Parochial Church Council. (See below. \*)

Tuesday 0930 The funeral of **May Jacobs** at Randalls Park Crematorium, Leatherhead. Lifts may be available; please consult the Vicar or Wendy Varney.

Wednesday 1030-1200 Coffee Morning in the Church Hall. A time for drinking coffee, and for relaxation, and pleasant conversation.

Saturday

The Vicar will be at the County Committee of the Royal British Legion this morning.

\*I misled everyone last week with a 'post-Christmas confusion-moment' about the purpose of the meeting on Monday evening. Many apologies. What is happening is that we shall be dealing with a Consultation Document issued by the Diocese in connexion with the Parish Share (still commonly known as the *Diocesan Quota*), and we would like to extend a *general invitation* to members of the congregation to participate in this, or even just to listen in. The last time an invitation of this sort was made, it had a dismal response - just one additional person turned up. It would be good if things were better this time. After all, it is a pretty important business: we are expected (at present) to make a yearly payment of about £55,000 to the Diocese, before anything is spent locally. The parishes have been asked once again to discuss a new approach to the matter. Every few years we are asked to re-invent this particular wheel, and so far no solution has pleased everyone.

A reminder that a clearly-presented **Statement of our own financial position** is in the Welcome Area, on the blue notice-board, and copies of the Report of the Parish Finance Review Group are available on the table opposite the book-trolley.

This is the last Sunday for the **Christmas Crib**. The 'green season' resumes tomorrow (see note below), and the decorations will be put away for another year.